



# Congressman Mike Simpson

## E-Newsletter

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### Simpson and Otter Push Tax Reform

WASHINGTON, D.C. - As taxpayers across America rushed to complete their income tax returns before the Tax Day deadline Thursday, Congressmen Mike Simpson and C.L. "Butch" Otter cited an alternative to the complicated formulas and obscure rules that cause confusion, fear and procrastination.

Simpson and Otter are cosponsoring legislation that would force Congress to quit talking the issue to death and get on with the job of making the Internal Revenue Code simple, transparent and fair.

The Tax Reform Action Commission (TRAC) would create a panel of experts to examine the tax system, build consensus around a responsible reform plan and ensure timely implementation of a replacement. The bill, H.R. 3215, already has 114 cosponsors, and momentum is growing.

"Uncle Sam and the IRS play a much too prominent role in the everyday lives of America's taxpayers. This legislation would help end that unwelcome intrusion and put a stop to a tax system that leaves too many working families confused, angry, and over-taxed," Simpson said. "I'm proud to support the TRAC Act because I believe it is our best hope for reforming the tax code and ending the yearly circus that accompanies tax season."



"Americans shouldn't need degrees in accounting, economics and law to understand the tax code. A system that further complicates the unpleasant process of financing necessary government services is incredibly costly and winds up eroding public confidence," Otter said. "Americans spend more than 6 billion hours and \$183 billion a year just learning tax rules and filling out forms. That's time not spent on work and families. That's money not going to savings, investment and economic growth. We can and must do better."

The TRAC Act would launch a tax-reform process similar to the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. It would establish a commission to recommend and submit legislation for a new tax code within two years. The new tax code could be implemented at the end of that period on an incremental basis, allowing individuals and businesses time to prepare and helping to ensure a smooth transition.

Besides its congressional cosponsors, the TRAC Act is supported by the Tax Foundation, Club for Growth Advocacy, Americans for Tax Reform, the National Taxpayers Union, Citizens Against Government Waste, Americans for Fair Taxation, Citizens for an Alternative Tax System, Institute for Policy Innovation, Institute for Research on the Economics of Taxation, National Retail Sales Tax Alliance, and National Small Business United.

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## Weekly Website

**GasBuddy.com** is a non-profit organization that lets consumers know where the cheapest gas is in their area. Log on to find Idaho's cheapest gas at **www.idahogasprices.com**

## Did you know?

AAA reports for New Gas Prices Set Record High on April 13, 2004

National Gas Price for 1 gallon, self-serve regular unleaded gas:

Current: \$1.78

(We need a National Energy Plan)

## Message from Mike

"I want to congratulate Kristen Swartz, a senior from Mountain Home for winning the High School Congressional Art Contest. Her photo titled 'Liberty' will hang in the U.S. Capitol representing the 2nd Congressional District for the next year." - Congressman Mike Simpson

## Quote of the Week

"We serve the cause of liberty—and that is always and everywhere a cause worth serving."

**President George W. Bush** at his Press conference concerning Iraq on April 13, 2004



## A National Energy Plan to Fuel America

### Reducing Dependency, Creating Jobs

Energy is the lifeblood of the economy. Economists agree—energy represents the most significant underlying cost of doing business in America. It drives our economy.

### Dependency Deteriorates Workforce

- When energy prices rise, employers feel the squeeze and Americans lose jobs.
- According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, America loses 12,389 jobs for every billion dollars we spend on imports. At today's oil prices, that means America is sending more than 1.7 million jobs overseas for oil every year.
- In 2003 alone, the United States sent more than \$100 billion overseas to import oil from foreign nations.
- An Estimated 85,000 jobs have been lost by U.S. chemical makers since natural gas prices began to rise in mid-2000. If we can't get natural gas at an affordable price, more and more of our production facilities will be forced to pack up and leave the country.
- We need an energy policy that increases safe domestic production to create jobs, drive our growing economy, and lower prices for consumers.

### Energy Plan = Job Creation

The Energy Plan before Congress is estimated to create 838,500 new, good jobs.

### From Natural Gas and Coal:

- More than 400,000 direct and indirect new jobs will be created through the construction of the Alaska Natural Gas Pipeline, while at the same time bringing an affordable energy supply to the lower 48 states.
- 38,000 direct jobs, 80,000 indirect jobs and an estimated 400,000 jobs from the multiplier effect.
- America's substantial investment in clean coal technology creates 62,000 jobs and ensures Americans new electricity that is abundant reliable, affordable and cleaner than ever before.
- 40,000 new construction jobs created by the construction of approximately 27 large clean coal plants.
- 12,000 jobs related to plant operation.
- 10,000 research jobs in the fields of math, engineering, physics and science at an estimated salary \$125K.

**More to come on Renewable Fuel Standard and Nuclear Energy in next issue.**

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# Congressmen Mike Simpson and C.L. 'Butch' Otter Oppose Bloated Highway Bill

## *Congressmen Cite Waste and Lack of Environmental Reforms in Voting NO*

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Idaho Congressmen Mike Simpson and C.L. "Butch" Otter voted against an overloaded federal highway funding bill on Friday that spends too much in the wrong ways and does too little to address the real problems facing America's transportation system.

Simpson and Otter said the Transportation and Equity Act: A Legacy for Users really amounts to an unwelcome legacy for American taxpayers. They acknowledged the need for upgrading roads and bridges, reducing congestion and improving safety. But they said H.R. 3550, which the House approved 357-65, is not the answer.

"Unfortunately, the transportation bill combines too little reform with too many pork barrel earmarks which leaves our nation's highway users and taxpayers with too little return on their investment," Congressman Simpson said.

"Without the streamlining provisions pushed for so hard by Congressman Otter, this bill promises to spend a lot of money in courts but not much money on pavement. While I cannot support this bill, I remain hopeful the negotiations between the House and the Senate will produce a

bill that contains more reforms, treats all states more equitably, and spends the taxpayer's money more wisely."

"The bill has no effective streamlining provisions to keep important transportation projects - like those along U.S. 95 in Idaho - from being delayed for years when over-

reaching environmental laws throw up bureaucratic roadblocks. That means good jobs don't get created, work doesn't get done and people keep dying along unsafe highways while lawyers

and paper pushers fight over a three-toed frog in a mud puddle," Otter said.

"There also is too much money in this bill for pork-barrel projects that don't make our corridors of commerce safer or more efficient. It's a matter of budget discipline and fiscal responsibility."



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# Seeking A Stronger Central Idaho

## By Congressman Mike Simpson

For a variety of reasons, I believe, the time is right to resolve many of the long standing and thorny land use, recreation, and wilderness designation issues in Central Idaho. It is time to put these old debates to rest and move ahead to a stronger, more secure economy in the rugged, beautiful and productive heart of Idaho.

Since my election to Congress, one of my highest priorities has been to resolve wilderness conflict issues in central Idaho. I realize the answer is not to create wilderness and walk away. That would only magnify the land use conflicts we already face. The solution is to first create an integrated economic development and recreation plan that addresses the needs of the people who live and recreate in central Idaho. If we do this, then maybe legislation could move forward that would include wilderness as a component.

This is not the first attempt to solve the Boulder-White Clouds management issue. Senator McClure and Governor Andrus worked together to find a wilderness compromise. Representative Stallings and then Representative Crapo each made their own attempts. Those efforts faced a political climate that made it difficult to compromise. Things are different now. Today, lawsuits, national monument threats, ESA protections for fish and wildlife, as well as a myriad of other restrictions and conflicts have forced all parties to reconsider the need for a compromise in the Boulder-White Clouds. We are now presented with a unique opportunity in which we can reach out to parties and find a long term solution. We have a rare opportunity to control our own destiny by crafting legislation that fits the needs of central Idaho.

During the past year, my staff and I have met with some of the groups that would be impacted by possible legislation. These meetings included Custer County's past and present commissioners, ranchers, snowmobilers, off road vehicle users, outfitters, conservationists and others. What I have heard has made me believe we can find a positive, reasonable outcome for the management of the Boulder-White Clouds that benefits all users. It has also made me realize there are four main components that would be addressed in any legislative package.

The first component is the need for economic development in Custer County. Custer County is larger than three states yet has just over 4,000 people. Unfortunately, it is burdened with a high proportion of public lands with over 95% of the county's 3.4 million acres administered by federal agencies. One only needs to speak to the County Commissioners to realize that this grossly disproportionate public ownership causes a severe strain on their resources.

Simply put, the county's tax base, or more specifically the lack thereof, is inadequate to support the services required for such an expansive county. I think it's important to note, the county's citizens and taxpayers are supporting those who recreate in the area by maintaining roads, law enforcement, search and rescue, medical aid and other services, infrastructure and facilities.

The second component is ensuring our ranchers, outfitters, miners and others who are permitted to operate on Forest Service and BLM lands in the Boulder-White Clouds can continue to maintain their livelihoods. They need an opportunity to remain as viable and sustainable operations so that they and their children can continue their traditional way of life. The third component consists of recreation and motorized users who need certainty so that they are guaranteed continued access to recreation areas without finding their roads or trailheads have been shut down overnight. The last component would release wilderness study areas deemed non-suitable for wilderness and designate wilderness taking into account the recommendations of the Forest Service and BLM. In addition, in order to protect the forests, communities and homes in the Stanley area, we need to look at the emergency removal of bug killed "red trees" before the forests are reduced to ashes.

While these four components will be central to resolving the Boulder-White Clouds issue, there are many other issues and groups that will play a part in the ultimate resolution. In the coming months I will be reaching out to these groups and the public to discuss how possible legislation may affect them.



Finally, it is important to remember that resolving old battles and moving to a strong future requires the active and constructive participation of the interested parties. The old approach of sacrificing the needs of one group to benefit another just won't work. It never did. What we must have is give-and-take, a willingness to find a reasonable compromise that addresses all those who care about the Boulder-White Clouds and depend on the area for their livelihoods and enjoyment. In the end, we need support from the people of Custer County, their elected representatives and the users of the area. With that support, I am confident that we can strengthen the local economy, preserve great recreational opportunities, protect a treasured area of Idaho and bring an end to the decades old debate.